

I holde hit be a siknesse
That I have suffred this eight yere,
And yet my bote is never the nere;
for ther is phisicien but oon,
That may me hele; but that is doon.
Passe we over until eft;
That wil not be, moot nede be left;
Our first matere is good to kepe.

SO when I saw I might not slepe,
Til now late, this other night,
Upon my bedde I sat upright,
And bad oon reche me a book,
A romaunce, and he hit me took
To rede and dryve the night away;
for me thoghte it better play
Then playen either at chesse or tables.

AND in this boke were written fables
That clerkes hadde, in old tyme,
And other poets, put in ryme
To rede, and for to be in minde
Whyl men loved the lawe of kinde.
This boke ne spak but of such thinges,
Of quenes lyves, and of kinges,
And many othere thinges smale.
Amonge at this I fond a tale
That me thoughte a wonder thing.

THIS was the tale: Ther was a king
That highte Seys, and hadde a wyf,
The beste that mighte bere lyf;
And this quene highte Alcyone.
So hit befel, therafter sone,
This king wolde wenden over see.
To tellen shortly, whan that he
Was in the see, thus in this wyse,
Soche a tempest gan to ryse
That brak hir mast, and made it falle,
And clefte hir ship, and dreinte hem alle,
That never was founden, as it telles,
Bord ne man, ne nothing elles.

Right thus this king Seys loste his lyf.

NOW for to speken of his wyf:

This lady, that was left at home,
Hath wonder, that the king ne come
hoom, for hit was a longe terme.
Anon her herte gan to erme;
And for that hir thoughte evermo
Hit was not wel he dwelte so,
She longed so after the king
That certes, hit were a pitous thing
To telle hir hertely sorwful lyf
That hadde, alas! this noble wyf;
for him she loved alderbest.

Anon she sente bothe eest and west
To seke him, but they founde nought.

ALAS! quoth she, that I was wrought!
And wher my lord, my love, be deed?

Certes, I nil never ete breed,
I make avowe to my god here,
But I mowe of my lorde here!

Such sorwe this lady to her took
That trewely I, which made this book,
Had swich pite and swich rowthe
To rede hir sorwe, that, by my trowthe,

I ferde the worse al the morwe
After, to thenken on her sorwe.

SO whan she coude here no word
That no man mighte fynde hir lord,
ful oft she swouned, and seide Alas!
for sorwe ful nigh wood she was,
Ne coude she no reed but oon;
But doun on knees she sat anoon,
And weep, that pite was to here.

MERCY! swete lady dere!
Quod she to Juno, hir goddessse;

Help me out of this distresse,
And yeve me grace my lord to see
Sone, or wite wherso he be,
Or how he fareth, or in what wyse,

And I shal make you sacrificyse,
And hoolly youre become I shal
With good wil, body, herte, and al;

And but thou wilt this, lady swete,
Send me grace to slepe, and mete
In my slepe som certeyn sweven,

Wherthrough that I may knowen even
Whether my lord be quik or deed.

With that word she heng doun the heed,
And fil aswown as cold as ston;

Hir women caughte her up anon,
And broghten hir in bed al naked,
And she, forweped and forwaked,
Was wery, and thus the dede sleep
fil on her, or she toke keep,

Through Juno, that had herd hir bone,
That made hir for to slepe sone;
for as she prayde, so was don,
In dede; for Juno, right anon,
Called thus her messagere
To do her erande, and he com nere.

Whan he was come, she bad him thus:

O bet, quod Juno, to Morpheus,
Thou knowest him wel, the god of slepe;

Now understond wel, and tak keep,
Seys thus on my halfe, that he
Go faste into the grete see,
And bid him that, on alle thing,
He take up Seys body the king,
That lyth ful pale and nothing rody.
Bid him crepe into the body,
And do it goon to Alcyone
The quene, ther she lyth alone,
And shewe hir shortly, hit is no nay,
How hit was dreynt this other day;
And do the body speke so
Right as hit was wont to do,
The whyles that hit was on lyve.
Go now faste, and hy thee blyve!

THIS messenger took leve and wente
Upon his weye, and never ne stente
Til he com to the derke valeye
That stant bytwene roches tweye,
Ther never yet grew corn ne gras,
Ne tree, ne nothing that ought was,
Beste, ne man, ne nothing elles,
Save there were a fewe welles
Came renning fro the clifles adoun,

That made a deedly sleping soun,
And ronnen doun right by a cave
That was under a rokke ygrave
Amid the valey, wonder depe.
Ther these goddes laye and slepe,
Morpheus, and Elympasteyre,
That was the god of slepes heyre,
That slepe and did non other werk.
This cave was also as derk
As helle pit overal aboute;
They had good leyser for to route
To envye, who might slepe beste;
Some henge hir chin upon hir breste
And slepe upright, hir heed yhed,
And some laye naked in hir bed,
And slepe whyles the dayes laste.

THIS messenger com flying faste,
And cryed: O ho! awak anon!
Hit was for noght; ther herde him non.

Awak! quod he, who is, lyth there?
And blew his horn right in hir ere,
And cryed Awaketh! wonder hye.
This god of slepe, with his oon ye
Cast up, axed: Who clepeth there?

Hit am I, quod this mesagere;
Juno bad thou shuldest goon.
And tolde him what he shulde doon
As I have told yow heretofore;
Hit is no need reherse hit more;
And wente his wey, whan he had sayd.

NON this god of slepe abrayd
Out of his slepe, and gan to goon,
And did as he had bede him doon;

Took up the dreynthe body sone,
And bar hit forth to Alcyone,
His wyf the quene, theras she lay,
Right even a quarter before day,
And stood right at hir beddes fete,
And called hir, right as she hete,
By name, and seyde: My swete wyf,
Awak! let be your sorwful lyf!
for in your sorwe ther lyth no reed;
for certes, swete, I nam but deed;
Ye shul me never on lyve ysee.
But good swete herte, look that ye
Bury my body, at whiche a tyde
Ye mowe hit finde the see besyde;
And farwel, swete, my worldes blisse!
I praye god your sorwe lisse;
To litel whyl our blisse lasteth!

WITH that hir even up she casteth,
And saw noght: A! quod she, for sorwe!
And deyed within the thridde morwe.

But what she sayde more in that swow
I may not telle yow as now,
Hit were to longe for to dwelle;
My first matere I wil yow telle,
Wherfor I have told this thing
Of Alcione and Seys the king.

OR thus moche dar I saye wel,
I had be dolven everydel,
And deed, right through defaute of
sleep,
If I nad red and taken keep
Of this tale next before:

And I wol telle yow wherfore;
for I ne might, for bote ne bale,
Slepe, or I had red this tale
Of this dreynthe Seys the king,
And of the goddes of sleping.

Whan I had red this tale wel,
And overloked hit everydel,
Me thoughte wonder if hit were so;
for I had never herd speke, or tho,
Of no goddes that coude make
Men for to slepe, ne for to wake;
for I ne knew never god but oon.

And in my game I sayde anoon,
And yet me list right evel to pleye;
Rather then that I shulde deye
Through defaute of sleping thus,
I wolde yive thilke Morpheus,
Or his goddessse, dame Juno,
Or som wight elles, I ne roghte who,
To make me slepe and have som rest;

I wil yive him the alderbeste
Yift that ever he abood his lyve,
And here on warde, right now, as blyve;
If he wol make me slepe a lyte,
Of downe of pure dowves whyte
I wil yive him a fether-bed,
Rayed with golde, and right wel cled
In fyn blak satin doutremere,
And many a pilow, and every bere
Of clothe of Reynes, to slepe softe;
him thar not nede to turnen ofte.
And I wol yive him al that falles
To a chambre; and al his halles
I wol do peynt with pure golde,
And tapite hem ful many folde
Of oo sute; this shal he have,
If I wiste wher were his cave,
If he can make me slepe sone,
As did the goddessse Alcione.
And thus this ilke god, Morpheus,
May winne of me mo fees thus
Than ever he wan; and to Juno,
That is his goddessse, I shal so do,
I trow that she shal holde her payd.

HADDE unneth that word ysaid
Right thus as I have told hit yow,
That sodeynly, I niste how,
Swich a lust anoon me took
To slepe, that right upon my book
I fil aslepe, and therwith even
Me mette so inly swete a sweven,
So wonderful, that never yit
I trowe no man hadde the wit
To conne wel my sweven rede;
No, not Joseph, withoute drede,
Of Egipte, he that redde so
The kinges meting Pharaos,